



Lyons, W. J. (2014). From Golgotha to Glastonbury and Beyond: The Transmutation of Jewish Burial Piety into English Imperial Exceptionalism. *Journal of the Bible and its Reception*, 1(1), 103-127. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jbr-2014-0006>

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1515/jbr-2014-0006](https://doi.org/10.1515/jbr-2014-0006)

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William John Lyons*

From Golgotha to Glastonbury and Beyond: The Transmutation of Jewish Burial Piety into English Imperial Exceptionalism

Abstract: At the 2010 New Delhi Commonwealth Games, the English gold medalists heard the music from the anthem ‘Jerusalem’ as they collected their medals. Chosen by a popular vote for that occasion, Sir Hubert Parry’s musical setting of the poetic introduction to William Blake’s epic poem, *Milton*, continues to serve as the most powerful piece of sacred music lauding England as a chosen nation, as the blessed place where the young Jesus walked and the aged Joseph of Arimathea founded the oldest church in Western Europe; it presents ‘Albion’ as the one place on earth in which Jerusalem is to be built anew. Yet the biblical Joseph was far removed from the British Isles for over a thousand years, long being thought in the East to have died in his hometown. It was through five incidental side-effects of important moments in the Joseph tradition’s growth that the pious Jewish councillor who appears momentarily to bury Jesus before disappearing from Mark’s gospel was transposed into the wealthy tin merchant-cum-decurio, soldier/knight-cum-uncle of Jesus who is found within the legends of Glastonbury and who supports an English exceptionalism which continues to echo today throughout the postcolonial spaces of the remnants of the British Empire.

Keywords: Christianity; England; Europe; Joseph of Arimathea; literature; modern; music.

DOI 10.1515/jbr-2014-0006

1 The Way Forward: Biblical Studies and the Reception History of the Bible

Studying the reception history of the Bible is – or could easily be – a garden of delights. If I may be permitted the use of a simplistic analogy, the journey from

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biblical studies as traditionally understood (with specializations in HB/OT or NT and a narrow focus on original meanings and contexts) towards a more expansive biblical studies in which the whole world of biblical interpretation – popular, technical, artistic, hubristic, ridiculous, whatever – would be open to scholarly investigation is like moving from a diminutive balcony flower-tub to a national park, part-cultivated/part-wild. True, some scholarly aspects may remain essentially the same as certain investigative methods are adapted and applied, as tending a small plot inevitably shares techniques with the cultivation of a large meadow. Similarly, the objects of study may also share key features, as horticulture, both small-scale and large-scale, responds to similar plants, processes and cycles. Indeed such commonalities should help to encourage the traditionalists among us to venture out into the wide-open spaces.

But there are also palpable differences between these two visions of biblical studies. The most significant of these lies in comparing the increasingly limited possibilities of intellectual productivity from the soil of the traditional discipline, already subject to over two hundred years of extensive exploitation, and the sheer excitement of the infinite variety of subjects/situations available out in the untidy wilderness that is the reception history of the Bible. Some may continue to like their scholarly task restricted in this way, and this is fine with me, especially if complementary approaches continue to have a chastening effect upon such practitioners; I am certainly not suggesting we abandon anything. But it seems to me that two centuries of what has effectively become a discipline of bonsai tree cultivation has left little untouched and is unlikely to prove exciting for too many for too much longer; how many volumes and PhD topics are now simply repeating what has gone before? Biblical studies, I would argue, should seize the opportunity to broaden its horizons and claim some academic territory while it is still in a position to do so.¹

¹ Though I believe reception history is the answer to our current woes, it is by no means new. We might point to R.E. Protheroe's first edition of his *The Psalms in Human Life* (London: John Murray, 1903) or to Ernst von Dobschütz's 1909 essay, "Bible in the Church" (in J. Hastings [ed.], *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark] 579–615), offered by D.P. Parris as the earliest example of reception history (*Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009], ix–x), or – depending on our definitions – look even earlier (e.g. the 16th century provenance described by N. Klancher, 'A Genealogy of Reception History', *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013), 99–129). It has been largely ignored, however, in the Enlightenment project called biblical studies, and it is that omission that needs to be remedied. Other attempts to redraw the terms of reference for biblical studies have taken one of two approaches. The first is to re-frame current practices in a different idiom, but leave the subject matter of the discipline unchanged; the biblical texts remain at the discipline's center, whether they are viewed through the lens of New Criticism, reader-response, or

To provide a suitable framework for what such an expanded discipline might look like, I suggest that we should configure the reception history of the Bible as a form of inquiry that is defined by two discrete but inter-related statements:

1. A general statement about its subject-matter – the near-infinite series of complex interpretive ‘events’ that have been generated by the journey of the biblical texts down through the centuries within various streams of tradition and through myriad contexts (including, we should add, any encounters with

deconstruction. The second is to examine the wider application of biblical texts, but to do so under the heading of some form of ‘minority’ criticism. Neither has proved able to budge the majority of those who hold posts in biblical studies into changing their traditional practices, however. It was one such attempt – that of George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh in their article “An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible” in *JBL* 128 (2009), 383–404 – which led me to think that the big issue for the discipline was not so much the methodologies it used to interpret the Bible, but rather its vision of the Bible altogether. Contrary to popular belief, the Bible is not in disciplinary terms a Hebrew/Greek text with a bit of Aramaic thrown in; rather it is whatever anyone at any given time has decided it was, the Vulgate, the King James Version, the Yorkshire Bible, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, whatever. The subject matter of biblical studies properly configured is not what scholars have long thought it was; it is something much larger, more exciting, and more relevant within a hostile Academy. Accepting and promoting such a message is, I believe, of paramount importance in the academic environment in which biblical studies now finds itself. As C. Vander Stichele has recently written, in relation to “the survival of Theology or Religious Studies as an academic discipline... in the Netherlands,”

there is less and less societal support for its presence in the academy... Biblical Studies has a hard time surviving as an academic discipline in such an environment and has thus become an endangered species. People who are retired are not replaced, including feminist scholars. The result is that younger scholars also do not get a chance to start an academic career in the field and that the whole discipline may be wiped out in a decade. The only way to survive may be for Biblical Studies to redefine itself in terms of cultural studies, as some scholars, such as John Lyons [“Hope for a Troubled Discipline? Contributions to New Testament Studies from Reception History,” in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33 (2010), 207–20] and Tim Beal [“Reception History and Beyond: Toward the Cultural History of Scriptures,” in *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011), 357–72] already suggested. That could make its position at least somewhat less vulnerable and contested than it currently is. It may, however, also be an opportunity to re-invent itself. Gender-critical issues can be part of such an endeavour. The crucial question however is, if there still is time to make such a cultural turn and/or if ‘resistance is futile’ (“Is Doña Quixote Fighting Windmills? Gendering New Testament Studies in the Netherlands”, *Lectio Difficilior* 1 [2103], 11–12, http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/13_1/vander_stichele_caroline_is_dona_quixote_fighting_windmills.html, accessed on 25 September 2013).

Indeed.

audiences that might currently be termed either ‘original’ or ‘inner-biblical’ ones).²

2. A technical statement about the limitations inherent within such an investigative approach to the biblical texts and their usage over time – a feature arising from the inevitable vagaries which are attached to the survival of evidence for specific interpretive encounters which have occurred during that two millennia-plus journey.

The conclusion to be drawn from these two statements is that there exists no simple set of questions for us to ask within reception history because it is impossible for us to ask identical questions of each and every biblical text, or of each and every occasion of biblical use or impact. It is the availability – or lack of availability – of specific types of information that enables us to ask a question of a certain text, a certain context, and a certain audience, and feel confident of having produced a satisfactory and plausible answer. But it is quite possible that we may never be able to ask that question successfully again; the answer produced may be the result of a once only opportunity, never to return. While we will be able to develop common questions that apply in a large number of situations where consistent types of information are available, learning as we go, it is the partial and happenstance nature of the work produced within reception history that will come to mark the future development of the approach, and indeed a discipline of biblical studies dominated by it. Reception history is a general stance taken towards a circumscribed but open-ended subject-matter, a stance that is heavily marked by the myriad investigatory tools that it must try to develop in order to interrogate the infinitely varied clusters of evidence presented to it via the arbitrary preservation methods of individual cultures. How can one fail to be excited by such a prospect?

² I would not wish to be misunderstood here. My use of terms like ‘text’, ‘context’, and ‘audience’ is not to be understood as the invocation of a set of essentialist items, each of which is available for an objectivizing study by the scholar interested in reception history; whatever it is that passes down through history, it is certainly not an unchanging lump of material encountered alike by all (and apparently misunderstood by the vast majority). Biblical texts exist and mean things because people encounter and interpret them from their very first moment of contact. Such audiences exist in turn as complex and located entities set within multiple traditions and settings which are both fluid and yet constraining. Added to the reception history mix is the scholarly investigator, also an interpreting reader and a located entity. Thus there is no way to read anything apart from these factors, but that does not somehow invalidate critical studies, least of all, studies of specific examples of reception history. Plausibility is a good enough criterion, I would argue; if we are honest about it, plausibility has always been our measure of the value or persuasiveness of any scholarly argument in biblical studies.

This open-endedness as to the possible inquiries that we may be able to pursue highlights another important aspect of reception history, one which will be demonstrated by the bulk of the article. While the evidence available both restricts and enables our ability to ask critical questions, there is little to stop us asking those questions from a wide variety of scholarly interests, locations, and ideologies, opening up both the possibility of choosing appropriate subject-matter for the kinds of investigations in which we are interested and the possibility of varying our approach to the same set of material in order to generate radically different conclusions. In what follows, for example, a selection of material concerning two thousand years of a minor biblical character, Joseph of Arimathea, and his afterlives that was originally collected in order to examine the growth of differing strands of tradition depicting him as either active or passive is viewed through a different lens, one focused upon the incidental nature of the development process.³ To be sure, scholars are unlikely to regard questions like these as equally valuable at any given moment, but such decisions as to what to pursue are ours to make and are not set for us by the values of the biblical text that we encounter or by its creators. The pragmatic interest of reception history – looking at what has actually been done with biblical texts and asking why – suits any number of current scholarly agendas and is capable of future adaptation. One day, and perhaps soon, it will form the majority part of what we call biblical studies.

2 The burial of Jesus and the Royal Wedding of William and Kate

We begin by considering two historical events which are separated by two millennia and yet linked by the appearance of Joseph of Arimathea at both. The first is the burial of Jesus. Described in the earliest canonical gospel, Mark, as “εὐσχήμων βουλευτής ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ” (a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God), Joseph asked Pilate for the body, took it down, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in a nearby rock tomb (15:42–47).⁴ Previously a stranger

³ The extended study was published by Oxford University Press in February 2014, as *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History*.

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

to Jesus, he appears to have acted out of a sense of either personal or communal piety, responding to the Torah-mandated need to remove the body from the cross before nightfall (cf. Deut 21:23).⁵

The second is the singing of the anthem, “Jerusalem”, at the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton on April 29, 2011.⁶ One of the *Daily Telegraph*’s headlines post-event declared “Jerusalem triumphant at Kate and Will’s wedding,” and the watching Irish “atheist-Catholic” comedian, Dara O’Brian, described it on Twitter as “the Prod’s best choon,” a phrase helpfully translated by the *Telegraph*’s writer, Martin Chilton, as the “wedding’s ‘best tune’”!⁷ Chilton went on to inform his readers that: “[Jerusalem’s] verses are thought to have been based on a legend that Jesus came to England as a young boy and visited the town of Glastonbury, ...” Not so much “came” though, as “was brought,” by his “uncle,” Joseph of Arimathea, a rich tin merchant.

The link between these two events might be as simple as Chilton proposes were it not for the fact that the tradition that he cites is of no great antiquity, perhaps arising as late as the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸ Even were that not the case, however, we would still have to wonder at the transmutation of Joseph from the ‘total stranger’ of the first event into the ‘favoured uncle’ of the second and ask how, when, and why this complex shift came about. Here it will be argued that it took five essential interpretive ‘twists’ – into the rich man (Section 4), into the soldier (5), into the Grail-bearer (6), into the English churchman (7), and into the uncle of Jesus (8) – to turn the pious Jewish councillor historically responsible for the burial of Jesus (Section 3) into the man ultimately responsible for the ode to English chosen-ness that was the Royal Wedding’s “Jerusalem.” Moreover, it will be shown that each of these five crucial ‘segues’ was essentially incidental to the task at hand for the interpreter(s) involved.

⁵ Though Mark’s text certainly displays his own interests, my own view is that his account of Joseph is as close to the historical figure of Joseph of Arimathea as it is possible for us to get (W.J. Lyons, ‘On the Life and Death of Joseph of Arimathea’, *JSHJ* 2 [2004], 29–53).

⁶ Details about the origin and content of the anthem will appear later, but readers may wish to stop here and search YouTube for an online video of that part of the wedding service. Turn up the volume and play it loud!

⁷ D. O’Brian, ‘Update on 29 April 2011’ (<http://twitter.com/daraobriain/statuses/63927262210306048>). He wrote: “In summation, then: No, Chewie didn’t get a medal; and Jerusalem is the Prod’s best choon. Better go now, this Portal 2 won’t play itself...”, accessed 30 April, 2011; M. Chilton, ‘Royal Wedding: Jerusalem triumphant at Kate and Wills wedding’, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April, 2011 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/royal-wedding/8483364/Royal-Wedding-Jerusalem-triumphant-at-Kate-and-Wills-wedding.html>, accessed 30 April, 2011).

⁸ Cf. A. W. Smith, “‘And Did Those Feet...?’ The ‘Legend’ of Christ’s Visit to Britain,” *Folklore* 100, (1989), 63–83.

The story that unfolds therefore demonstrates the power of even incidental by-products within the reception history of one minor biblical character, Joseph of Arimathea.

3 Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph of Arimathea appears in all four canonical gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – with each presenting roughly the same story of his involvement in Jesus' removal from the cross and the burial of his body (Matt 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56a; John 19:38–42). He does not appear anywhere in the gospels outside of that time frame, though he may perhaps be seen as being pre-figured by earlier themes, characters or events (e.g., the 'rich man' in Matthew's version of the 'camel/eye of the needle' saying [19:23–26]). No extant contemporary Christian or non-Christian text mentions Joseph by name; he is known to us today only from the canonical gospels and the details that derive from them.

We might have expected to meet Joseph initially in Matthew, the 'first gospel' and the Church's pre-eminent teaching gospel. Though the Griesbach hypothesis concerning gospel relationships – that Matthew wrote first, Luke used his gospel, and then Mark used both – is reprised occasionally, however, most critics now view Mark as the earliest gospel (Markan priority), with it then being seen either as a source for Matthew and Luke who worked without knowing each other's texts (the Two Source hypothesis, involving a hypothetical second source, Q) or as a source used by Matthew and then, with Matthew, by Luke (the Farrer hypothesis, a position which no longer needs Q); for reasons of my own ambivalence, what follows will allow for either of these last two positions.⁹ The position taken on the question of John's relationship to Mark will be to accept recent arguments suggesting that John knew only Mark.¹⁰ Joseph of Arimathea's first appearance – in an extant text at least – was thus in the Gospel of Mark, usually dated to the late sixties CE, with every account that we now possess owing something to that text.

⁹ On these various positions, see, e.g., M. Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2001). Goodacre is himself a major proponent of the Farrer Hypothesis.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g., R. Bauckham, 'John for Readers of Mark', in his edited volume, *The Gospel for all Christians* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1998), 147–71; and J. D. Crossan, "Historical Jesus as Risen Lord," in *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict*, ed. J. D. Crossan et al. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 23–6.

The four gospel accounts are not identical, however. Traditionally interpreters have assumed that the variants represented complementary details which filled out the historical figure of Joseph. Historical-critical scholarship, perhaps surprisingly, has tended to adopt that assumption uncritically. In the case of W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, commenting on Matthew 27:57, for example, their choice of words made clear their belief that each Evangelist was providing reliable information: “All our gospels give us an account of this man”; “John... provides the additional information that...”; Mark [...] asserts that ...”; “...and to this information, Luke adds that...”; and “We are indebted to Matthew alone for the information that...”¹¹

The twin assumptions of reliability and complementarity and the practice of harmonization that has followed in their wake should be viewed with suspicion, however, because they can as easily hide the specific contours of each gospel’s Joseph as reveal them. This comment from C.E.B. Cranfield on Mark 15:46, for example, is typical: “That the tomb belonged to Joseph is not stated, but it is natural to assume that it did.”¹² Since this detail appears only in Matthew, its naturalness is less a feature of Mark’s text – or indeed of Luke’s or of John’s – than it is a by-product of Cranfield’s conflation of the two narratives. My own position, defended elsewhere, is that all of the extra details derive from the interaction between Mark’s largely historical account (outlined briefly in Section 2 above) and the ideologies of the other Evangelists (on which, in the case of Matthew, see Section 4 below).¹³ As we shall see, that basic process was at work throughout the development of Joseph’s reception history – often with unintended yet significant results.

4 Joseph, the Rich Man

In Matthew’s rendering of Mark’s account, Joseph is no longer described as a βουλευτής [member of the council], εὐσχήμων [respected], or otherwise. (Compare this with Luke 23:50 where βουλευτής is retained, but εὐσχήμωνή is dropped for ἀγαθός [good], and δίκαιος [righteous]. Instead Joseph has become an ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος [a rich man], a change in status that may owe a little to Mark’s use of εὐσχήμων, but is much more likely to be due to Matthew’s deep

¹¹ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 355.

¹² C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 462.

¹³ W. J. Lyons, “On the Life and Death of Joseph of Arimathea,” 38–44.

interest in seeing the events of the life and death of Jesus Christ as the prophetic fulfillment of Scripture, a pattern extensively deployed in his text (e.g., 1:22; 2:15; 12:17; 13:35, 21:4; 27:9).¹⁴ The quotation of Isaiah 53:4 in Matthew 8:17 makes explicit the Evangelist's interest in relating Jesus to the so-called "suffering servant song" of Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:9 (LXX) reads: καὶ δώσω τοὺς πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῆς ταφῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἀντὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ [I will give the wicked man for his burial and the rich man for his death]. But how could Jesus' burial after the ignominy of his crucifixion have anything to do with the burial accorded to a rich man?¹⁵

Matthew's answer was to portray Joseph as a rich man "ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐμαθὴτεῦθῃ τῷ Ἰησοῦ," [who was also himself discipled to Jesus] (Matt 27:57 – translation mine), turning the unwitting Arimathean into a wealthy believer who would perfectly demonstrate Jesus' maxim that "for God all things are possible" (cf. Matt 19:23–26). His need for a rich man's tomb to fulfill Scripture led the Evangelist to refashion Joseph into the shape of a wealthy disciple, who would be free to place his master's body into his own 'high-status' tomb. Joseph thus became a rich man as a by-product of Matthew's interest in prophecy and its fulfillment.

This incidental Matthean emphasis on wealth was extensively developed by European painters during the Renaissance. In Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition from the Cross* (ca. 1435), a large altarpiece commissioned by Louvain's Guild of Crossbowmen for their chapel, Our Lady of Ginderbuiten, a centrally-placed Joseph supports the body of Christ from behind as it is lowered from the cross.¹⁶ He is depicted as an influential, wealthy Jew, an elderly, white-haired and balding man, with a heavily lined brow, solemn face, and forked grey-white beard dressed in a black velvet mantle lined with fur, over a "carmine tunic" with golden trim on the sleeves and hem elaborately decorated with gold-set rubies and sapphires

¹⁴ While it is true that Matthew does not here employ a stock phrase indicating scripture fulfillment, most commentators eventually have little difficulty in making this connection (cf., e.g., W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew, Vol. III: XIX-XXVIII* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 648)

¹⁵ That the "rich man" involved was originally understood – by parallelism – to also be a wicked man did not bother Matthew. In R. H. Gundry's words, "his use of the OT easily surmounts such obstacles" (*Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994], 580).

¹⁶ A. Powell, "The Errant Image: Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition from the Cross* and Its Copies," *Art History* 29, (2006), 540–62 (542). Subsequently Mary of Hungary (1505–58), the Stadtholder of the Low Countries, who was ruling the region as the representative of her older brother, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, purchased the original, and after her death, the painting was shipped to Spain and came into the collection of the powerful King of Spain, Philip II. The source of many copies and much emulated for centuries, it is now in the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid.

interspersed with pearl couplets and a beaded edge, with a “vermillion hose” and black, silver-clasped, shoes and a crimson hat.¹⁷ Though capable of being portrayed dressed plainly in works influenced by this painting (cf. esp. *The Head of Saint Joseph of Arimathea in Prayer*, attributed to Albrecht Bouts [d. 1549], and now in the Egerton Collection, at Tatton Park, Cheshire), the opulence of van der Weyden’s pearl, emerald, and ruby-laced, gold lined, velvet clothed, and fur-lined mantle served to emphasize Joseph’s wealth and status among the group at the foot of the cross, with only Nicodemus even approaching his finery.

The piety and wealth of Matthew’s Joseph offered powerful patrons in the fifteenth-century – and continues to offer their equivalent today – a biblical figure worthy of contemplation and of emulation. When Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates offered \$750 million to support a malaria-eradication program, some Christian writers explicitly compared him to Joseph and Nicodemus who “were very rich born again Christians who used their wealth for good causes” (so N. Walkin).¹⁸

5 Joseph, the Soldier

Around 382, Jerome of Stridon was asked by Damasus, Bishop of Rome, to revise the Old Latin gospels in the light of the Greek.¹⁹ In the old Latin of Mark 15:42 and Luke 23:50, βουλευτής [member of the council], had been translated as “*decurio*”;²⁰ Jerome’s *Vulgate* retained that usage (on the meaning of which, see below).²¹ Of the two Lukan adjectives, ἀγαθός was rendered as “*bonus*” [good],

¹⁷ D. de Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden: The Complete Works* (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1999), 20.

¹⁸ Walkin, *Praying for Miracles*, 2nd ed. (Xulon Press, 2011), 375–6. In an Easter Sunday sermon in Rio de Janeiro, placed online, the Rev. Canon Stuart Broughton placed Joseph “in the same league as Bill Gates,” and re-named him “Joseph ‘Bill Gates’ of Arimathea” (“The day God came back to life”: an Easter Day Sermon” (<http://www.christchurchrio.org.br/cchurch/newscontent.asp?id=7051>, accessed 15 October, 2012).

¹⁹ S. Rebbenich, *Jerome* (London: Routledge, 2002), 32–3.

²⁰ A. Jülicher, *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, vol. 2, *Marcus Evangelium* 2nd ed. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1970), 155; A. Jülicher, *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, vol. 3, *Lucas Evangelium* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1954), 268.

²¹ The modern *Vulgate* includes a number of revisions of Jerome’s work, including those of Alcuin of York in the late eighth-century for Charlemagne, and the ‘Clementine’ version commissioned by the Catholic hierarchy in the 1590s. Our best witness to Jerome’s original translation is therefore the early eighth-century *Codex Amiatinus* (C. Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Amiatinus* [Avenarius Et Mendelssohn, 1850], with Matthew 27, 57; Mark 15:42(43), 88–9; and Luke 23:50, 141).

and δίκαιος as “*iustus*” [just] (in one manuscript, *Colbertinus*, “*iustus*” is lost altogether, leaving “*bonus homo*” [good man]).²² The Markan adjective εὐσχήμων [respected] was rendered either by “*dives*” [rich] (e.g., manuscripts *Colbertinus*, *Bezae Cantabrigensis*, *Corbeiensis*, and *Monacensis*) or by a near synonym, *locuples* [a person of substance], i.e., “wealth” (manuscript *Sangallensis*), echoing its use of *homo dives* for Matthew 27:57’s ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος.²³ Jerome’s Latin, however, was closer to the Greek, using *nobilis* [noble or renowned], and moving away from an explicit affirmation of Joseph’s wealth towards an emphasis on the esteem in which the man was held.

What then was the significance of Jerome’s rendering βουλευτής as *decurio* in what eventually was to become the dominant Latin translation of the West, the *Vulgate*? Strictly speaking, a *decurio* was a “member or representative of a group of ten.”²⁴ C. Gizewski has suggested two potentially relevant meanings for the *Vulgate*’s usage, however: (a) the *decurio* as an honorary unpaid member of the *curia*, [the council] – in towns and colonies under Roman law; and (b) the *decurio* as a minor Roman military officer commanding a group of ten.²⁵ Council-membership was restricted to citizens, over twenty-five years old and of independent financial means. The *decurio* took turns in public office and gained considerable status.²⁶ Evagrius, Jerome’s patron during his many years in Antioch before taking up Damasus’ commission, was of the curial class.²⁷ M.H. Williams summarizes his background: “Evagrius was the son of an Antiochene curial class of middling wealth and standing; they descended from a third-century general, likely a Latin, who defeated the Palmyrene Zenobia under emperor Aurelian.”²⁸ As F.D. Gilliard notes, “throughout the Empire in the fourth-century, if you scratch a Bishop you will most likely find a curiales”; Evagrius, eventually elevated to Bishop of Antioch in 388, was one such.²⁹ Though his long-term benefactor did not act as a councillor, Jerome would surely have understood the term in the light of Evagrius’

²² Jülicher, *Lucas Evangelium*, 268.

²³ Jülicher, *Marcus Evangelium*, 155; cf. A. Jülicher, *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, vol. 1. *Matthäus Evangelium* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1938), 209.

²⁴ C. Gizewski, “*Decurio, Decuriones*,” in *Brill’s New Pauly Online*, 2011, eds. H. Cancik et al., <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/decurio-decuriones-e312510?s.num=174&s.start=160> (accessed 22 May, 2013).

²⁵ Gizewski, “*Decurio, Decuriones*.”

²⁶ Gizewski, “*Decurio, Decuriones*.”

²⁷ M. H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 29.

²⁸ Williams, *Monk and the Book*, 29.

²⁹ F. D. Gilliard, “*Senatorial Bishops in the Fourth Century*,” *HTR* 77, (1984), 154–5.

social status. Significantly, however, although the military use of *decurio* might also have influenced Jerome – Evagrius’ family had a military background, though he did not serve in the legions – the term’s polyvalence would have had the incidental effect of allowing later audiences deeply familiar with the *Vulgate* to view Joseph as a soldier.

This was perhaps the case with the twelfth-century English nobleman, Harscuit Musard. A patron of Ely Abbey, Musard was described by the monks as a “*bonus decurio*...greatly favored by the king, praised for his honesty, and if not greater than the nobles of the country, at least their equal, having knights [*militēs*] under him.”³⁰ According to J. Paxton, such plaudits would have made any audience “steeped in the *Vulgate*” think of Joseph, Scripture’s only *decurio*, and have led to the Abbey’s benefactor being labeled with Mark’s *nobilis* and Luke’s *bonus et iustus*. Musard’s “having knights under him” would also, she argues, have created echoes with the Centurion of Matthew 8 and Luke 7.³¹ As Musard, the commander of numerous soldiers, was being compared to the noble, just, and good man who had buried Christ, however, so Joseph of Arimathea was being compared in turn to a very powerful “man at arms,” a mental linkage which would surely have informed a twelfth-century audience’s understanding of Jerome’s *decurio*, quickly removing any need for them to think about the Centurion at all.

6 Joseph, the Grail-bearer

In *The Book of the Bee*, a thirteenth-century compilation of Near Eastern Church traditions, Joseph of Arimathea preaches in Galilee after Jesus’ death, before dying in his hometown, “Ramah.”³² With the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, such traditions could have become known to Western churchmen. There would have been little incentive for them to ‘export’ these stories to their homelands, however, and none at all for them to have claimed that he ever went there. So how did Joseph come to found the first English church at Glastonbury in South-West England?

Dominating the twelfth century’s French Grail romances was Chrétien de Troyes’ unfinished *Perceval: Le Conte du Graal* [Percival: The Story of the Grail],

³⁰ J. Paxton, “Lords and Monks: Creating an Ideal of Noble Power in Monastic Chronicles,” in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe 950-1350*, eds. R. F. Berkhofer et al. (London: Ashgate, 2005), 235.

³¹ Paxton, “Lords and Monks,” 235.

³² D. K. E. Crawford, “St Joseph and Britain: The Old French Origins,” *Arthuriana* 11 (2001), 12.

written around the mid-1180s.³³ This takes Britain (*Bretagne*) as its setting, and tells the story of Perceval, a young man born in Wales who becomes a knight under the British King, Arthur. While staying in the castle of “the Fisher King,” he sees a procession of precious objects, including a bleeding lance and a golden jewel-encrusted grail. Significantly, the grail is not a cup; it is a platter with no literal connection to the bloody events of Christ’s passion.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, Joseph plays no role in the *Perceval*.

Numerous works were produced to conclude Chrétien’s text. Using his knowledge of the canonical gospels and of works such as the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (which recounts Joseph’s overnight imprisonment by the Jews following the burial of Jesus and his miraculous release the next morning by the risen Jesus) and the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (which recounts the curing of the Emperor’s son, Titus, by a cloth bearing Christ’s images), a French Burgundian poet, Robert de Boron, produced a trilogy of related romances – *Joseph d’Arimathie*, *Merlin*, and *Perceval* – around 1200.³⁵ A single interpretive move made in the *Joseph d’Arimathie* offers the likeliest explanation as to why the Arimathean was introduced into the *Bretagne* of the Grail romances. Robert decided to turn the grail into a ‘blood relic’ of the cross; the bleeding spear was dropped altogether, with the cup used by Jesus at the last supper now being used to contain his blood.³⁶

This alteration had significant unintended consequences for Joseph. He and Nicodemus were the most obvious candidates in the gospels to have collected the blood of the crucified Christ, but the cup’s appearance at the foot of the cross required a mechanism by which it might have passed to one of them. Robert’s solution is flaky, but it works – just. Jesus is arrested in the upper room, not Gethsemane; the cup he used is passed to Pilate by an un-named Jew involved in the arrest; Pilate gives it to a “soldier” [a *chevalier*] in his service who has requested the body out of devotion to Jesus; Joseph is that man, and so it comes to be in his possession as the corpse is lowered from the cross.³⁷

The *Perceval*’s use of Britain as the backdrop for a knight’s encounter with the platter-grail became unavoidably prominent in the *Joseph d’Arimathie*; Robert

³³ R. L. Krueger, “Chretien de Troyes and the Invention of Arthurian Courtly Fiction,” in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. H. Fulton, (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 160–2.

³⁴ When its use was described, the foodstuff that it was said to be improperly used in serving was fish, and not a liquid as we might expect (N. Bryant, *Merlin and the Grail: Joseph of Arimathea, Merlin, Perceval: The Trilogy of Arthurian Prose Romances attributed to Robert de Boron* [Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008], 4).

³⁵ N. Bryant, *Merlin and the Grail*, 2–3; Crawford, “St Joseph and Britain.”

³⁶ Crawford, “St Joseph and Britain,” 14.

³⁷ Bryant, *Merlin and the Grail*, 18–21.

had to explain how Jesus' cup had come to be in that country.³⁸ In his text, Joseph would remain imprisoned for many decades (rather than the one night of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*), sustained by Christ, before being released by Vespasian (not Titus), who had been miraculously healed in Rome by an image of Christ on a cloth and had then travelled to Jerusalem to avenge the death of Jesus. It would be the risen Christ who declared Joseph the Grail's guardian during his long imprisonment, thus destining him to cause the cup, through his descendants, to be taken to the West, to the British Isles, as he died in the land of his birth.³⁹

In the thirteenth-century, Robert's account was re-worked further in the five works known as the *Vulgate cycle*: the *Estoire del Saint Graal*, the *Estoire de Merlin*, the *Lancelot*, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, and the *Mort D'Artu*. In the *Lancelot*, the *Queste*, and the *Estoire*, Robert's depiction of Joseph was developed into a series of accounts in which the Arimathean himself would travel to the West, and become "the founding father of Britain" (so C.J. Chase).⁴⁰ The *Lancelot* describes Joseph as the first Christian knight, sent by God with the Grail, in order to conquer Britain, a conquest which succeeds by way of religious conversion. His son Galahad is described as the first Christian King of Wales and he is also described as an ancestor of Arthur's Lancelot who, through his Joseph-lineage, is said to have King David as his ancestor.⁴¹ In the *Queste*, Joseph is described as the ancestor of every Grail knight *except* Lancelot. His son Galahad appears only by allusion, but another son, Josephus, is included in a number of "flashback" scenes.⁴²

In the *Estoire*, the *Quest*'s flashbacks are re-narrated as they happened, in chronological sequence. After his long imprisonment (now said to be "forty-two years"), Joseph is tasked by God with leading his people – Moses-like – from the East to the West. Baptised by St Philip in Jerusalem, he departs with Josephus to "preach, work miracles, convert and baptize" in the West.⁴³ Though the *Estoire* notes that Joseph served Pilate as a soldier for seven years, any battles won against infidel foes in Britain are fought by converted kings and not by Joseph the knight. When Josephus eventually becomes the celibate head of the English Church and takes on the guardianship of the Grail, Joseph has another son, Galahad, who becomes the King of Wales and is the direct ancestor of all of the Grail knights, Lancelot again excepted, putting Joseph at the center of both spiritual and political life in the *Bretagne* of the romances that were so popular in continental Europe.

³⁸ Crawford, "St Joseph and Britain," 14.

³⁹ Bryant, *Merlin and the Grail*, 34–44.

⁴⁰ C. J. Chase, "The Gateway to the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*: *L'Estoire del Saint Graal*," in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. C. Dover, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 69.

⁴¹ Chase, "Gateway to the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*," 69–70.

⁴² Chase, "Gateway to the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*," 72.

⁴³ Chase, "Gateway to the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*," 73.

Robert's initial decision to turn the platter-grail into a blood relic had wrought major changes upon the Joseph tradition by way of a by-product, but it had not as yet brought him to the attention of the people of the British Isles. But the scene was set for that to take place.

7 Joseph, the English Churchman

By the time of the Domesday book of 1086, Glastonbury Abbey was the wealthiest in England.⁴⁴ When its second Norman Abbot, Henry of Blois, inspected his Abbey in 1126, however, he was unimpressed with its state of repair. The powerful brother of King Stephen, Henry built “many new buildings including a bell tower, chapter house, cloister, lavatory, refectory, dormitory, the infirmary with its chapel, a castellum..., an outer gate, a brewery, and stabling for houses”⁴⁵ and gave it valuable gifts.

Unfortunately, on May 25, 1184, not long after Henry's death in 1171, many of the buildings of the Abbey were destroyed by fire. The funding required to rebuild was both substantial and scarce. Unlike other British religious foundations with their well-known patron saints – St Cuthbert at Durham, St Augustine of Rome and St Thomas Beckett at Canterbury – Glastonbury's claim to saintly patronage, and the pilgrim revenues that went with it, was decidedly weak.⁴⁶ With the timely discovery of the bones of King Arthur and his queen, Guinevere, in 1191, however, the Abbey's fortunes began to recover; pilgrims came, money flowed, and buildings rose. Fifty years earlier, Geoffrey of Monmouth had included the Arthurian legends in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca. 1136), and linked Arthur's “Isle of Avalon” to the West Country; in the *Life of Gildas*, a Welsh text from the same period, Glastonbury's Abbot had brought King Arthur and Queen Guinevere to the town. For the monks, these works not only suggested a new Abbey patron, their popularity also offered “free advertising.” But Joseph appeared nowhere in their accounts.

In the 1230–40s, however, a complication arose for the monks. They began to respond, hesitantly, to the stories about Joseph that were contained within the *Vulgate Cycle*; presumably these texts (or news of them) had begun to reach England. Their favored Abbey history, that of William of Malmesbury, completed in the 1130s, was recopied in 1247 with the addition of a tentative claim – “it is said” – that Joseph of Arimathea was the leader of twelve missionaries sent by St Philip

⁴⁴ P. Rahtz and L. Watts, *Glastonbury: Myth and Archaeology* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), 40–1, 44–5.

⁴⁵ Rahtz and Watts, *Glastonbury: Myth and Archaeology*, 46.

⁴⁶ Rahtz and Watts, *Glastonbury: Myth and Archaeology*, 47.

to Britain, who had preached the gospel in Glastonbury in 63 CE.⁴⁷ The close similarity of the Arthurian narratives to the narrative of ‘origins’ which the Abbey had been developing since the fire left the monks little option but to incorporate some of their elements into the Glastonbury account. The Grail could have no place for theological reasons, however, and the 63 CE date mentioned also indicates that a forty-two year imprisonment was rejected in favor of a much shorter imprisonment, almost certainly the ‘one night’ imprisonment of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Joseph had been inserted into the Abbey’s story with minimal fuss.

Around 1340, John of Glastonbury began his *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey* with petitionary prayers, some addressed to Joseph:

Hail, glorious Joseph [*Ioseph gloriose*], who take your name from Arimathea, who saw with grief Christ who suffered for humankind, and who fervently and virtuously asked his body of the governor Pilate, that it might be buried on the day of preparation. Help us mightily in our struggle, that we may rise after him with grace. Amen.

Joseph, be a benevolent soldier [*miles...benignus*] for all who pray to you, that we may be turned from unworthy into worthy ministers.⁴⁹

Without anyone intending that it should be so, Joseph had become both the acknowledged founder of the English Church and a saint.

8 Joseph, the Uncle of Jesus

Largely unheralded during his lifetime, but regarded today as one of most important English figures of the Romantic movement, William Blake (1757–1827) used

⁴⁷ So D. K. E. Crawford, “St. Joseph in Britain: Reconsidering the Legends, Part I,” *Folklore* 104, (1993), 86–98 (87). For V. M. Lagorio, however, hesitancy was not the issue. Instead she argues that the monks’ encounter with the Joseph stories in the Grail material just proved too great an opportunity to claim an original apostolic conversion for them to resist (“The Evolving Legend of St. Joseph of Glastonbury,” *Speculum* 46, [1971], 215–6).

⁴⁸ The earliest surviving Old English manuscript of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* had been donated to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric [d. 1072] and so the text was almost certainly available in both Latin and Old English to the monks in the thirteenth century (C.W. Marx, “The Gospel of Nicodemus in Old English and Middle English,” in Z. Izydorczyk [ed.], *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe* [Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies; v. 158, 1997], 208). John of Glastonbury would quote the *Gospel of Nicodemus* at length in his *Chronicle*, c. 1340.

⁴⁹ J. P. Carley, *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey: An Edition, Translation and Study of John of Glastonbury’s Cronica sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis Ecclesie* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1985), 5.

imagery and ideas drawn from what Christopher Rowland has described as his prime source of inspiration, “the Bible appropriately read,” to express his own radical form of visionary spirituality through engravings, paintings, and poetry.⁵⁰ He rejected rationalistic views of the Bible, of its ethics, and of religion in general, preferring to develop what Rowland calls a “complex myth of individual and social redemption,” usually embedded within epic poems such as *The First book of Urizen* (1794), *Milton: A Poem* (1804–11), and *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804–20), with which to critique society.

The four stanzas now familiar to us as “Jerusalem” are part of one such epic, as a poetic section within the preface to some early printings (Copies A and B) of Blake’s *Milton*. Preceding it is a prose call to arms, addressed to contemporary painters, sculptors, and architects. Blasting the suppressive influence of the writings of ancient Greek and Latin writers on the likes of Shakespeare and Milton and their danger to the present as embodied in “the Camp, the Court, and the University,” Blake called for a rejection of the Greek and Roman models undergirding the Enlightenment in favor of the biblical model of “Christ and his apostles.” Be true to your “imagination,” Blake exhorted his audience of creatives, an aspiration summed up in the quotation which ends the preface, Numbers 11.29: “Would to God that all the Lords People were Prophets.”⁵¹ The poetic section sits between:

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was the Holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

⁵⁰ C. Rowland, *Blake and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale, 2010), 3.

⁵¹ The mixture of antinomian radical traditions that lie behind Blake’s work is helpfully articulated in E.P. Thompson’s *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 10–21, and is taken up, along with the work of earlier proponents of that view, in Rowland’s recent study of *Blake and the Bible* (2011, 158–80); Thompson’s proposal that the Muggletonians form the direct antecedents to Blake’s thought (1993, 65–105) has found little favor, however.

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.⁵²

Martin Chilton, quoted above, assumed that these words reflect the traditions in which the young Jesus was brought to England by his uncle, Joseph of Arimathea. A.W. Smith has argued, however, that these do not predate the mid-nineteenth century.⁵³ The words are metaphors, he concluded; though Blake likely knew of traditions about Joseph of Arimathea visiting England (cf. his 1773 engraving of “Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion”), he did not know of a tradition in which Jesus came to England. As evidence, Smith offers plate 77 of *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, which ends:

... and London's towers.
Recieve [sic] the Lamb of God to dwell
In England's green and pleasant bowers.⁵⁴

For Smith, no-one, “least of all Blake,” would have understood these words as literally indicating that the “Lamb of God” was received by “London’s Towers” or dwelt in “England’s green and pleasant bowers.”⁵⁵ Ironically, however, a literal visit of Jesus to England has been seen in “Jerusalem” virtually ever since Sir Hubert Parry was asked by Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, to turn the preface’s poetic section to “suitable, simple music... that an audience could take up and join in” for Francis Younghusband’s *Fight for Right* movement in 1916;⁵⁶ it is via

⁵² C. Rowland, *Blake and the Bible*, 120.

⁵³ A. W. Smith, ‘And Did Those Feet...?’, 63–83.

⁵⁴ Smith, “‘And Did Those Feet...?’”, 72.

⁵⁵ Smith also quoted plate 27 of the epic *Jerusalem*, from “Chapter Two: To the Jews”:

The fields from Islington to Marybone,
To Primrose Hill and Saint Johns Wood:
Were builded over with pillars of gold,
And there Jerusalem's pillars stood (Smith, ‘And Did Those Feet...?’, 72–3).

⁵⁶ The human cost of the war in France was increasingly apparent by 1916 and Younghusband’s *Fight for Right* movement was created in order to bolster the nation’s weakening resolve to see the war to its end (F. Younghusband, *Fight for Right* [New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s sons, 1918]; cf. P. French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* [London: Harper Perennial, 1994], 302–3).

this misunderstanding, incidental to Blake's intentions, that Joseph was to make his way, eventually, to Westminster Abbey and the Royal Wedding.

Parry soon withdrew his permission for the anthem to be used by Younghusband's organization,⁵⁷ and it was first used by another movement to which he and his wife – an ardent suffragette – were partial, the *Votes for Women* campaign, in a concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 13 March 1916.⁵⁸ With the end of the war, the Suffrage movement increasingly found the anthem a suitable one for its purposes; one leader, Millicent Fawcett, wrote to Parry that “Your ‘Jerusalem’ ought to be made the women voters’ hymn.”⁵⁹ The war had also led to the creation of a Women's Institute (WI) in England, intended to combat the submarine menace by increasing home-grown food stocks through the making of preserves and the pickling of perishables. A letter to *Home and Country*, the WI journal, from Vice Chairman Grace Hadow in 1923 proposed that the Institute adopt “Jerusalem” as an anthem, pointing out the opportunities its singing would provide:

the learning [of the song] would give pleasure to any WI and would afford an excellent opportunity for a short talk either on Blake's poetry, or on poems about England. We have long looked in vain for a national ‘Institute Song’. Here is one made to our hand and one which some counties have already adopted.⁶⁰

Some objected, however: “What woman nowadays yearns for bows, arrows, spears and chariots of fire? Boadicea might have done, but that was a long time ago.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, WI members supported the idea and the first official rendition of “Jerusalem” took place at the Institute's 8th Annual General Meeting in London on 20 May, 1924.⁶²

“Jerusalem” also became part of the musical repertoire of the British Empire, being sung by school children across the globe on Empire Day and performed at events such as the British Legion Festival of Empire and Remembrance in 1927,

⁵⁷ French, *Younghusband*, 308.

⁵⁸ D. Fitch, *Blake Set to Music: A Bibliography of Musical Settings of the Poems and Prose of William Blake* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 167. Parry's pupil, Walford Davies, subsequently took the music to a publisher and soon the song was being used in ways far beyond that of boosting morale in war-time, not least among the churches (cf., e.g., *Hymns of the Kingdom* [1923], the Church of Scotland's *Church Hymnary* [1927], *The American Student Hymnal* [1928], and *The Hymnary of the United Church of Canada* [1930]; Fitch, *Blake Set to Music*, 168).

⁵⁹ Anonymous, “FAQs: WI website,” <http://www.thewi.org.uk/faqs> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012).

⁶⁰ Anonymous, “FAQs: WI website,” <http://www.thewi.org.uk/faqs> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012).

⁶¹ S. Goodenough, *Jam and Jerusalem: A Pictorial History of Britain's Greatest Women's Movement* (London: Collins, 1977), 34.

⁶² Anonymous, “FAQs: WI website,” <http://www.thewi.org.uk/faqs> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012).

broadcast to the Empire and intended by its sponsor, the *Daily Express*, to renew the friendships forged between the Empire's soldiers during the Great War.⁶³ The anthem's role within the Commonwealth that replaced the Empire was exemplified by its use during the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 and by its more recent adoption, albeit without Blake's words, as the English 'national anthem' during the 2010 New Delhi Games,⁶⁴ aping already existing usage in national sports such as cricket, rugby, and football.⁶⁵ Showing scant regard for England's late twentieth-century multi-cultural society, the actor, Keith Allen, one of the members of the celebrity pop group "Fat Les," whose rendition was used as English Football's anthem for the 2000 European Championship, said of "Jerusalem" that "[e]veryone has heard [it], most of us have sung it and all of us know some of the words. Frankly, it's a cracking good hymn."⁶⁶

Typically, it takes an Irishman to show the English what it really takes to sing the words of "Jerusalem" with real gusto, however. At Glastonbury in 2011, U2's Bono inserted some of Blake's words into two songs, "Where the streets have no name" and "Bad." During the former, he sang:

And did the Countenance Divine.
Shine forth upon your clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded there...
... In England's green and pleasant Land.⁶⁷

The Irishman's spatial distancing is obvious from his swapping-out of the Englishman's "our" and "here" for "your" and "there," underlined above. Even when singing at Glastonbury itself, and acknowledging its age-old history in a subsequent TV interview, Bono could not bring himself to sing "our" and "here." His reluctance

⁶³ J. Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain, 1876–1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 161–2.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Anonymous, "XIX Commonwealth Games," <http://d2010.thecgf.com/> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012).

⁶⁵ See, for example, S. Condrón, and P. Matthews, "Why Britain should sing Jerusalem on Thursday," [2005] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/cricket/article-361425/Why-Britain-sing-Jerusalem-Thursday.html> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012).

⁶⁶ R. Thomas, "England pick Jerusalem and Fat Les for Euro 2000," 2000; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2000/may/09/newsstory.sport6> (accessed 3 Sept. 2012). Fat Les consisted of Allen, the artist, Damien Hirst, and the band *Blur*'s Alex James, and released a number of singles around the turn of the Millennium including 'Vindaloo,' eventually an unofficial 'England' theme for the 1998 Football World Cup.

⁶⁷ "U2 – Where The Streets Have No Name – Glastonbury 2011," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pjve5n7jeGk> (accessed on 18 Apr. 2013).

to refrain from singing about not resting until Jerusalem has been “builted... In England’s green and pleasant Land” was also perfectly understandable – at least to anyone who is not a stereotypical English person singing one of their most popular anthems about their divinely-chosen “green and pleasant land,” its early visitors, Jesus and Joseph, and its depiction as the site of the New Jerusalem!

As the anthem boomed out in Westminster Abbey on the wedding day of William and Kate, the tiny nation at the heart of the former British Empire was more than happy to share its eternity-laden values with the all of the guests who were present and with the watching worldwide audience of billions. Goodness knows what any of the foreign participants made of it, however! And goodness knows what the pious Jew who buried Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, would have made of it either! By the most incidental and unrelated of means, he has been moved from the role that he played in Mark’s gospel through the possession of ostentatious wealth, through valiant military service, through faithful guardianship of a unique relic, through foundational churchmanship, and through close familial relationship with Christ, to the role he played in the Royal Marriage, and – doubtless in future – beyond.

9 Conclusion

Not long after the Royal Wedding, yet another episode in the reception history of Joseph of Arimathea began; he again took center stage, but this time at the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics. Here we may be able to see the beginnings of a glittering future career for Joseph. Had Bono, the foreign leaders and guests in Westminster Abbey, the watching billions abroad, and indeed the Arimathean himself, had access to the *Opening Ceremony’s Media Guide*, they would have been able to read – or at least perhaps hear in translation! – these stirring words penned by Danny Boyle, the Ceremony’s Artistic Director:

The Ceremony will take us through great revolutions in British society – the Industrial Revolution, the revolution of social attitudes that began in the 1960s and the digital revolution through which we’re living now. Woven through it all, there runs a golden thread of purpose—the idea of Jerusalem—of a better world that can be built through the prosperity of industry, through the caring nation that built the welfare state, through the joyous energy of popular culture, through the dream of universal communication. We can build Jerusalem. And it will be for everyone.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ D. Boyle, “London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony: Media guide,” http://www.london2012.com/mm/Document/Documents/Publications/01/30/43/40/OPENINGCEREMONY-GUIDE_English.pdf (accessed 4 Sept. 2012).

The culmination of Joseph of Arimathea's journey down through two thousand years of reception history, traced in this article through so many incidental segues from the tomb of Jesus near Golgotha to the Royal Wedding in Westminster Abbey, was apparently never about rubbing every foreigner's nose in English dirt, it seems. For the artistic director of the Olympic Opening Ceremony, it was always meant to be an "England-shaped" message for a wider "Olympic-sized" pool of humanity, including apparently Bono, the multitude of wedding-watchers, and even Joseph of Arimathea himself. According to Boyle, the time had come in 2012 for the peoples of the whole world to join in with the English, singing "Jerusalem" for all they are worth. This time there would be no need for anyone, not even an Irishman, to change any of the words. Joseph of Arimathea's eschatological and utopian future was truly at hand! Or, given what has proved to be the transitory nature of the glow from the London Games, we might perhaps just want to restrain ourselves and simply mutter that, "one of his many futures was at hand!"⁶⁹ Joseph's reception history is not over yet ... and that is the real glory of the thing.

Acknowledgments: I would like to record my thanks to those who commented on earlier drafts of this essay – to Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch, James Crossley, Jorunn Økland, and Simon Woodman – and to Christina Petterson and the members of the Ideology, Culture, and Translation group who heard a shorter version at the SBL Annual Meeting in Chicago in November 2012. Many others have commented on aspects of the material behind this article, too many to mention, but my thanks go to them as well.

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⁶⁹ Cf. e.g., the Sun newspaper's headline March 22, 2013, "Britain's Olympic spirit has been killed by the recession: Ceremony guru Danny Boyle's bombshell," <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4854282/danny-boyle-olympic-spirit-killed-by-recession.html> (accessed 25 Sept. 2013).

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